



NEW JERSEY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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July 5, 2005

Comment 143

Chief, Regulations & Procedures Division  
Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau  
ATTN: Notice No. 41  
Post Office Box 14412  
Washington, DC 20044-4412

Dear Chief:

For reasons I do not understand, federal alcohol beverage label regulations do not presently permit most beer, wine and distilled spirits companies to provide information about their products so consumers can make informed choices about what, and how much, to drink. Your Bureau is to be commended for seeking public comment on this proposed regulatory change.

Foods, soft drinks, non-prescription drugs, and even dietary supplements give consumers basic information on the label. Alcohol beverages (with some exceptions) are the only major class of consumables that do not provide this information on the label. TTB should allow companies to voluntarily list information such as serving size and servings per container, as well as alcohol, calories, fat, carbohydrates and protein per serving. In my view, the amount of alcohol per serving would be especially valuable to potential consumers.

The federal government's advice on moderate drinking, as provided in *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (USDA & HHS, 2005) reports in part:

"The majority of American adults consume alcohol. Those who do so should drink alcoholic beverages in moderation. Moderation is defined as the consumption of up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. Twelve fluid ounces of regular beer, 5 fluid ounces of wine, or 1.5 fluid ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits count as one drink for purposes of explaining moderation."

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Allowing label information on alcohol per serving and servings per container on beer, wine and distilled spirits labels will help consumers better understand what they are consuming. Given the wide variety of formulations, container sizes and alcohol concentrations in available products, as well as regulatory disparities as to what information may be placed on beer, wine and distilled spirits labels, most consumers will welcome more information about how particular products relate to the *Guidelines'* advice.

Consumer Service Facts should make clear what constitutes a "serving." This essential fact will allow consumers to make more informed comparisons between products and better understand what is in a standard serving of any alcohol beverage.

The standard serving definition used in the *Dietary Guidelines* (12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of table wine and 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits) is widely used by federal government agencies, public health groups, consumer groups, and a majority of state driver's license manuals. It makes sense to me to apply the same definitions as the benchmark for labels.

I urge your Bureau to act quickly to promulgate a regulation that permits meaningful, consumer-oriented serving facts on beer, wine and spirits labels. Meanwhile, I urge you to allow manufacturers to provide this kind of information on labels while the rulemaking process proceeds.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Merkt  
Assemblyman — District 25

RANI/cpc